

## Taking Stock: The Disappearance of German-American Literature?

In 1860 newspaper editor Rudolf Lexow recognized that German-American literature—as distinct from the literature published by Germans in Europe—could play an indispensable role in promoting and preserving German culture in the United States. That year he announced a literary competition in the *New-Yorker Criminal-Zeitung und Belletristisches Journal* (New York Crime Reporter and Belletristic Journal) that aimed to awaken the immigrants’ “slumbering powers” and induce them to create literary works reflective of “the fates of Germans on this continent.”<sup>1</sup> Having received twenty-three manuscripts for consideration, the judges felt the contest had exceeded expectations.<sup>2</sup> The prize-winning entry, Reinhold Solger’s *Anton in Amerika*, a novel about the American trials and tribulations of a German who arrives in New York in 1857 planning to go into business, launched another literary project ten years later; Lexow selected it to serve as Volumes I and II in the *Deutsch-amerikanische Bibliothek*, a series published by Ernst Steiger in New York City. Lexow believed the undertaking would help the German language, spirit, and character “move toward a significant future” in the United States; indeed, he predicted that

- 1 Rudolf Lexow, “Preis ausschreiben,” *New-Yorker Criminal-Zeitung und Belletristisches Journal*, 23 November 1860: 568. All translations are my own. For a more extensive discussion of this competition, see my introduction to Reinhold Solger, *Anton in Amerika: A Novel from German-American Life*, transl. Lorie A. Vanchena (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), xviii–xxi.
- 2 Wilhelm Aufermann et al., “Preis ausschreiben des Belletristischen Journals: die Entscheidung der Preisrichter,” *New-Yorker Criminal-Zeitung und Belletristisches Journal*, 3 January 1862: 964.

this new literary collection would represent “one of the most powerful forces of the German spirit in the western hemisphere.”<sup>3</sup>

The “slumbering powers” of German-American writers were awakened by Lexow’s literary projects and others like it—and fueled by growing numbers of German immigrants, which reached more than a quarter of a million in the peak year of 1882.<sup>4</sup> It is difficult to estimate precisely how many German-language literary works appeared in the United States at this time. To provide one oft-cited example: the German-American collection of the German Society of Pennsylvania encompasses approximately 10,000 books, but as Brent O. Peterson points out, this significant number does not include the poetry and narrative prose published in German-American periodicals also housed at the library.<sup>5</sup> Novels, short fiction, and poetry certainly appeared in book form, but often only after being featured in German-language magazines and newspapers.<sup>6</sup> Some of the titles that appeared in Steiger’s *Deutsch-amerikanische Bibliothek*, for instance, including *Anton in Amerika*, had originally been serialized in the *New-Yorker Criminal-Zeitung und Belletristisches Journal*.

- 3 Rudolf Lexow, “Literatur und Kunst,” *New-Yorker Criminal-Zeitung und Belletristisches Journal* (früher *Criminalzeitung*): *Eine Wochenschrift für Literatur, Kunst, Wissenschaft, Politik und Tagesgeschichte*, 29 March 1872: 54.
- 4 Günter Moltmann, “The Pattern of German Emigration to the United States in the Nineteenth Century,” in *America and the Germans: An Assessment of a Three-Hundred Year History*, vol. 1, eds Frank Trommler and Joseph McVeigh (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 14–24, here 21.
- 5 Brent O. Peterson, “How (and Why) to Read German-American Literature,” in *The German-American Encounter: Conflict and Cooperation between Two Cultures 1800–2000*, eds Frank Trommler and Elliott Shore (New York: Berghahn Books, 2001), 88–102, here 101. *The German Language Press of the Americas, 1732–1955*, by Karl J. R. Arndt and May E. Olson (3 vols., Munich: Verlag Dokumentation, 1973), lists approximately 5000 German-language newspapers and periodicals. See also Werner Sollors, “German-Language Writing in the United States: A Serious Challenge to American Studies?” in *The German-American Encounter*, 103–114, here 103.
- 6 Patricia Herminghouse, “Radicalism and the ‘Great Cause’: The German-American Serial Novel in the Antebellum Era,” in *America and the Germans*, 306–320, here 306.

And yet, nearly 140 years after the first volumes of the *Deutsch-amerikanische Bibliothek* appeared, accompanied by high hopes for the significant cultural contribution they represented, historian Elliott Shore posed questions that address the apparent disappearance of the German-American literary tradition:

The realm of German America that has been most closed off, most sealed away from the rest of American life is the world of German-American literature ... [H]ow could these inaccessible texts, hidden away in research libraries and written in a "foreign" language, have anything to add to our understanding of the German part of American history? Are these works antiquarian curiosities that can only be of interest as relics of a forgotten past?<sup>7</sup>

The struggle between German and Anglo-Saxon culture has not turned out as Lexow projected. The new century, with its two World Wars and their consequences, contributed to the decline of German Americans as a "distinct cultural and ethnic group."<sup>8</sup> Assimilation also played a role. While America is a country much shaped by German immigrants, this shaping has been all but forgotten because it is such an integral part of the American landscape. As Cora Lee Kluge points out in her recent anthology *Other Witnesses: An Anthology of Literature of the German Americans, 1850–1914*, the history and fate of German-American literature "are parallel to the history and fate of the German language in America." With the loss of German, she observes, texts in German have become "hidden, submerged, unread, and unknown" and "a *different* point of view" on American exigencies has been lost.<sup>9</sup> Jeffrey L. Sammons attributes what "seemed like the abrupt vanishing of the German-American cultural symbiosis" at the start of World War I to the sharp decrease (96 percent) in the number of

7 Elliott Shore, "Introduction: A New View of the Nineteenth Century," in *The German-American Encounter*, 3–5, here 5.

8 Frank Trommler, "Introduction," in *The German-American Encounter*, x–xix, here xiii.

9 Cora Lee Kluge, "Introduction," in *Other Witnesses: An Anthology of Literature of the German Americans 1850–1914*, ed. Cora Lee Kluge (Madison, WI: Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies, 2007), xi–xiv, here xi.

schoolchildren learning German between 1915 and 1922.<sup>10</sup> This chapter will discuss a selection of significant scholarly contributions to the field of German-American literature from the last decade or so—taking stock, if you will—and consider the prospects for German-American literature as an object of scholarly inquiry, if not for a general readership.

Germanist Frank Trommler and cultural historian Sander L. Gilman have written essays that shed light on the twentieth-century history of this discipline. Tracing the development of a relationship between academe and German-American ethnicity, Trommler describes how institutions such as the University of Pennsylvania and Harvard University began “reclaiming ethnic representation through academic documentation” around 1900, at about the same time that academics were becoming interested in the area of transatlantic relations.<sup>11</sup> Just as German immigration was declining at the start of the twentieth century, however, newly established graduate programs modeled after German *Germanistik* increasingly disregarded German-American topics as subjects that did not constitute high culture.<sup>12</sup> Gilman observes that German-American literature was further marginalized from the 1930s to the 1950s within both German and American studies, a result of academic critics’ philological approach and the “growing antiquarianism and parochialism of the ‘official’ publications of German-American (note the hyphen) literature.”<sup>13</sup> Both scholars discuss changes that occurred in the late 1960s, when universities embraced ethnic studies and scholars began looking at popular writers such as Karl May and German-American

10 Jeffrey L. Sammons, *Kuno Francke’s Edition of ‘The German Classics’ (1913–15): A Critical and Historical Overview* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009), 4. Sammons cites Edwin H. Zeydel, “The Teaching of German in the United States,” *German Quarterly* 37 (1964): 315–392.

11 Frank Trommler, “Literary Scholarship and Ethnic Studies: A Reevaluation,” in *German? American? Literature? New Directions in German-American Studies*, eds Winfried Fluck and Werner Sollors (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 25–40, here 25, 30.

12 *Ibid.*, 30.

13 Sander L. Gilman, “German? American? Literature? — Some Thoughts on the Problem of Question Marks and Hyphens,” in *German? American? Literature?* 7–23, here 7–8.



canonical figures such as Friedrich Gerstäcker.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, from 1968 to the 1980s, German-American literature as heritage studies became “more and more the stepchild of American German Studies.”<sup>15</sup> The few studies in this field that were taken seriously, Gilman maintains, included works such as those by historian Kathleen Neils Conzen on the construction of German-American identity in Milwaukee, and Linda Pickle’s feminist study of German-speaking women in the rural Midwest.<sup>16</sup>

The juxtaposition of popular versus high literature remained a central issue in the scholarly assessment of the German-American literary tradition. In his important and instructive essay, “How (and Why) to Read German-American Literature,” Brent Peterson argues that, while ordinary nineteenth-century German Americans read literature published in German-language books, magazines, and newspapers, professors “have seldom stooped to that ‘low’ level.” He does concede, however, that academics’ reasons for preferring texts from Germany are “long-standing and understandable, if not entirely noble.”<sup>17</sup> In his essay, Peterson dissects an unknown story published in 1871 in the German-American family journal *Die Abendschule*, arguing convincingly for the inclusion of such German-American texts in history and literary studies, “both as a means of understanding the hopes and fears of their original readers and as an opportunity to reflect on the function of language within other ethnic groups, at other times and places.”<sup>18</sup>

A perceived lack of quality, particularly in comparison to German literature published in Europe, has contributed to the scholarly neglect of

14 Ibid., 8; Trommler, “Literary Scholarship,” 32.

15 Gilman, “German? American? Literature?” 9.

16 Ibid. Gilman attributes this neglect in part to the “exploding field of ‘exile studies’” starting in the 1960s that considered the German Jewish Diaspora in the United States and elsewhere. See Kathleen Neils Conzen, *Immigrant Milwaukee, 1836–1860: Accommodation and Community in a Frontier City* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976); Linda Schelbitzki Pickle, *Contented Among Strangers: Rural German-Speaking Women and Their Families in the Nineteenth Century Midwest* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1996).

17 Peterson, “How (and Why),” 88.

18 Ibid., 91.

this considerable body of work. Patricia Herminhouse, a Germanist who has argued for the inclusion of German-American studies in the field of German studies, has described much of the early prose fiction published by Germans in the United States as “highly derivative, maudlin, stylistically flawed, and often inordinately long”—reasons enough, she writes, for most readers to set the works aside before they could even start appreciating the literature’s inherent value as social documents.<sup>19</sup> Americanist Werner Sollors also calls attention to this widely held perception: “We may have known for a very long time that German-American literature is historically long-lasting and quantitatively significant—but, the reader may ask, how about the *quality* of this literature? Are there any ‘good,’ ‘interesting,’ or otherwise ‘important’ texts among them?”<sup>20</sup>

Sollors answers the second question with a resounding “yes.” In his pathbreaking volume from 1998, *Multilingual America: Transnationalism, Ethnicity, and the Languages of American Literature*, he observes:

[N]on-English languages of the United States have been marginalized in the field of American studies, even when it has intersected with ethnic studies or has been undertaken with a multicultural focus, as well as in comparative literature, and in literary histories of the United States as well as in histories of French, German, Spanish, Scandinavian, and other relevant literatures. This is a great, great loss.<sup>21</sup>

To address the problem, Sollors makes a strong case for an inclusive and integrative definition of American literature, an “English plus” rather than an “English only” approach that reimagines literature published in America in languages other than English (including indigenous Amerindian languages, Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, French, Dutch, German, Norwegian, Yiddish, and Japanese) as American literature and thus as an important contribution

19 Herminhouse, “Radicalism,” 306.

20 Werner Sollors, “Foreword,” *Anton in America: A Novel from German-American Life*, by Reinhold Solger, transl. Lorie A. Vanchena (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), xi–xiv, here xii–xiii.

21 Werner Sollors, “Introduction,” in *Multilingual America: Transnationalism, Ethnicity, and the Languages of American Literature*, ed. Werner Sollors (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 1–13, here 6.

to the multilingual heritage of the United States.<sup>22</sup> The Longfellow Institute at Harvard University, founded in 1994 and directed by Sollors and Marc Shell, aims “to support the study of non-English writings in what is now the United States and to reexamine the English-language tradition in the context of American multilingualism.” Furthermore, the Longfellow Institute seeks “to identify, and to bring back as the subject of study, the multitudes of culturally fascinating, historically important, or aesthetically outstanding American texts that were written in many languages.”<sup>23</sup> The Institute’s Web site provides an annotated list of recent essay collections, studies, and editions and translations of texts on American multilingualism, including contributions on German-American literature.

Sollors also edits the series *New Directions in German-American Studies*, which began in 1999. Embodying an international collaborative effort among scholars from disciplines as diverse as modern languages, political history, American studies, and anthropology, the series subjects “the large topic of German-America to new critical scrutiny” and uses new approaches to “force new thinking about what constitutes ‘German literature’ and what have been the defining, though too little recognized, multilingual features of ‘American literature.’”<sup>24</sup> Seeking “to reconnect German American Studies with current trends in German Studies and American Studies,” the series considers “America’s largest linguistic and ethnic—and also very literate—minority in international, polyethnic, and multilingual contexts.”<sup>25</sup> *New Directions in German-American Studies* includes volumes not only with a literary focus (the English translation of Solger’s *Anton*) but also works such as *Between Natives and Foreigners: Selected Writings of Karl/Charles Follen (1796–1840)*, edited by Frank Mehring (2007),

22 Ibid.

23 The Institute is named after Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, the “polyglot nineteenth-century poet who, in his translations and academic work, helped to develop literary study across linguistic boundaries.” See <<http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~lowinus>> (accessed 13 July 2010).

24 Sollors, “Foreword,” xiii–xiv.

25 Werner Sollors, “The German American Tradition Reconsidered,” in *German? American? Literature?* 3–5, here 4.

and *Radical Passion: Ottilie Assing's Reports from America and Letters to Frederick Douglass*, edited and translated by Christoph Lohmann (1999). The most recent volume in the series, *Kuno Francke's Edition of 'The German Classics' (1913–1915): A Critical and Historical Overview* (2009), written by Germanist Jeffrey L. Sammons, examines the series' origins, editors and contributors, translators, and illustrations. While this volume focuses on the reception in America of German literature, Sammons hopes that his study will generate "further inquiry into this nexus of German-American intercultural discourse."<sup>26</sup>

The second volume in the series *New Directions in German-American Studies, German? American? Literature?* includes an important essay by Trommler entitled "Literary Scholarship and Ethnic Studies: A Reevaluation" (already cited above). Trommler welcomes Sollors's approach, which he describes as an integrative framework for reclaiming literature in German as part of multilingual America without losing "otherness"—albeit perhaps only in an academic context.<sup>27</sup> He does ask, however, whether the intellectual and financial commitment this approach requires can be found outside of academe, and he also cautions that, whereas recovering texts in a comparative context might help generate appreciation of the other, "the question is whether appreciation of the other is enough of a clue for the recovery of the inner-ethnic understanding of literature and culture and their functions between the new and the old homelands."<sup>28</sup> Despite a considerable body of scholarly work on German-American literature since its beginnings, as well as emerging approaches for contextualizing ethnic literature, Trommler argues, scholars of cultural studies in the United States generally focus on Germany, and their work tends not to be informed by newer methodological approaches, in particular those coming from the fields of history and the social sciences.<sup>29</sup> His agenda for future progress is twofold: German-American studies needs to catch up "with advances

26 Sammons, *Kuno Francke's Edition*, 277.

27 Trommler, "Literary Scholarship," 33–34.

28 Ibid., 34.

29 Ibid., 37.

in the social sciences without losing sight of the framework of literary criticism” and produce “accessible knowledge about texts and artifacts as cultural achievements, educational tools, and popular possessions which function as catalysts—not just reflections—of ethnic identities.”<sup>30</sup>

A valuable essay collection edited by Germanists Lynne Tatlock and Matt Erlin, *German Culture in Nineteenth-Century America: Reception, Adaptation, Transformation* (2005), explores the circulation and appropriation of German cultural material in nineteenth-century America—not American perceptions of Germany or vice versa, but rather Americanization as the processes “by which Americans took up, responded to, and adapted” German ideas, values, and products, reforming and repackaging them for their own purposes.<sup>31</sup> As the editors explain, their approach is informed by the theory and practice of the critical category of cultural transfer and is motivated in part by the widespread scholarly interest in rethinking the character of “national” cultures and concepts such as hybridity, cultural agency, and strategies of acculturation.<sup>32</sup> Several essays examine literary reworkings of German texts by American-born, English-speaking writers, translators, literary historians, publicists, and biographers, including Annis Lee Wister, Louis Untermeyer, and Mark Twain, but also by German-speaking immigrants such as Heinrich Börnstein, Franz Lieber, and Reinhold Solger.

Kluge’s *Other Witnesses* should be mentioned again in this context. Published by the Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies at the University of Wisconsin–Madison in 2007, the volume presents a diverse and valuable selection of texts (poems, plays, prose fiction, reports, and memoirs) by writers such as Christian Essellen, Solger, Mathilde Franziska Anneke, Theodor Kirchhoff, Udo Brachvogel, and Caspar Butz that aim to “awaken interest in the contributions of the German Americans, add other American voices to the cultural narrative, and thereby make possible

30 Ibid., 39–40.

31 Lynne Tatlock and Matt Erlin, “Introduction,” in *German Culture in Nineteenth-Century America: Reception, Adaptation, Transformation*, eds Lynne Tatlock and Matt Erlin (Rochester: Camden House, 2005), xi–xxi, here xi.

32 Ibid., xiii–xiv.

a more complete understanding of our heritage.”<sup>33</sup> The publisher in this case is also significant. As stated on the dust jacket for Kluge’s book, the Max Kade Institute “is dedicated to sharing information and preserving documents concerning German immigration and its legacy, while at the same time making resources available to schools, scholars, and the general public.”<sup>34</sup>

Interdisciplinary studies of German-American relations also serve as important resources for literary scholars and should therefore be mentioned here. *Transatlantic Images and Perceptions: Germany and America since 1776*, edited by David E. Barclay and Elisabeth Glaser-Schmidt (1997), includes essays by historians, political economists, and a Germanist (Trommler) that “use the tools of historical analysis to understand the process by which perceptions of the other are generated and expressed.”<sup>35</sup> A two-volume publication edited by Frank Trommler and Joseph McVeigh, *America and the Germans: An Assessment of a Three-Hundred Year History* (1985), presents articles by scholars representing a broad range of disciplines (history, German, political science, English, and sociology, among others) that focus on “Immigration, Language, Ethnicity” (volume 1) and “The Relationship in the Twentieth Century” (volume 2).<sup>36</sup> Another publication, *The German-American Encounter: Conflict and Cooperation between Two Cultures 1800–2000* (2001), edited by Frank Trommler and Elliott Shore, includes a selection of essays by historians, social scientists, and literary scholars from both sides of the Atlantic that seek to “reframe the parameters of the German-American encounter” and the “transatlantic crossings of people and ideas” that are at the core of this encounter.<sup>37</sup>

33 Kluge, “Introduction,” xii.

34 See the Max Kade Institute’s Web site, <<http://csumc.wisc.edu/mki/About/1.AboutFrames.htm>> (accessed 13 July 2010).

35 David E. Barclay and Elisabeth Glaser-Schmidt, “Introduction,” in *Transatlantic Images and Perceptions: Germany and American Since 1776*, eds David E. Barclay and Elisabeth Glaser-Schmidt (Washington, DC: German Historical Institute, 1997), 1–17, here 2.

36 See note 4.

37 See note 5; see Trommler’s introduction to this volume, x–xi.

The growing body of scholarship being done by historians and social scientists in the fields of transatlantic, transnational, and migration studies provides scholars working on German-American literature with valuable impulses and theoretical frameworks. A volume edited by Thomas Adam and Ruth Gross, *Traveling between Worlds: German-American Encounters* (2006), includes a particularly insightful contribution by Christiane Harzig, for example, entitled "Gender, Transatlantic Space, and the Presence of German-Speaking People in North America." In her essay Harzig examines the German migration experience in part by differentiating between socio-cultural variables such as region, class, religion, and time. She describes German migration as taking place "not in two separate worlds, involving uprootedness and resettlement, but as movements in transatlantic space—an approach that may lead to the discovery of more similarities and familiarities, as well as subtle translations and adaptations."<sup>38</sup>

Interesting developments related to German-American studies are also taking place at scholarly conferences. At the German Studies Association (GSA) conference held in San Diego in 2007, Patricia Herminhouse and Brent O. Peterson organized two interdisciplinary panels and a roundtable discussion to help integrate German-American studies into the GSA meeting.<sup>39</sup> The various presentations explored not only the relationship between German-American studies and broadly comparative approaches such as migration studies and transnational studies, but also ways in which these interdisciplinary approaches could be connected to German studies. Two of the conference papers and the roundtable discussion are of particular interest for our purposes; while they did not focus solely on German-American literature, their relevance to the study of this literary tradition is, I believe, evident.

38 Christiane Harzig, "Gender, Space, and the Presence of German-Speaking People," in *Traveling between Worlds: German-American Encounters*, eds Thomas Adam and Ruth Gross (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2006), 146–182, here 175.

39 For an account of these panels, see "Conference Report: 31st German Studies Association Conference," H-GAGCS, December 2007, <<http://www.h-net.org/~gagcs/>> (accessed 13 July 2010).

Historian Dirk Hoerder, speaking on “German History in a European Perspective: Migration and Cultural Interaction across the Centuries,” suggested an alternative to bordered nation-state approaches, namely transregional or translocal perspectives, which he felt provide the best theoretical and empirical framework for research in German and also German-American studies. Frank Trommler, discussing “German American Spaces, Transatlantic Distances: Negotiating Current Paradigms,” argued that German-American studies can draw from current scholarship on the movement between different cultures, including contemporary international migration and intercultural relocation. He demonstrated that, in the early twentieth century, different understandings of what it meant to become American existed and that distance and also closeness to Europe were negotiated differently. Examining how the dual (or multiple) ethnic identities of German Americans drew suspicion at the outbreak of World War I, Trommler turned to paradigms on intercultural identities (Conzen’s model of modern integration patterns in host societies and Harzig’s definition of transatlantic space, for example) to help explain how this ethnic group negotiated both distance and closeness.<sup>40</sup> Significantly, Trommler also drew on Enrique T. Trueba’s study of Hispanics, *The New Americans: Immigrants and Transnationals at Work* (2004), in which the author posits that transnational people have the ability to function effectively in two different cultural environments—an insight that can help us understand how German immigrants, for example, learned to negotiate the nineteenth-century American cultural landscape. During the lively roundtable discussion, Peterson spoke about the value of using important theoretical innovations from minority literature. He also argued that German-American studies would benefit from branching out and making the study of German-American literature relevant and exciting—both drawing on and also contributing to other disciplines.

40 See Kathleen Neils Conzen, “Phantom Landscapes of Colonization: Germans in the Making of a Pluralist America,” in *The German-American Encounter*, 7–21; Conzen, “German Americans and the Invention of Ethnicity,” in *America and the Germans*, vol. 1, 131–147.



Several scholars built on these efforts at the GSA conference held in Washington, DC, in October 2009. A conference panel entitled "German-American Transnationalism in the Nineteenth Century: Poetry, Novels, and Autobiography" explored cultural transfer, narrative patterns of transculturality, and the formation of transnational identity. Michael Boyden focused on the relationship between cultural transmission and transnational identities in his discussion of the bilingual autobiography of the German-American journalist and statesman Carl Schurz. Sigrid Nieberle examined the narrative patterns of nation, gender, and the places called "America" and "Germany" in novels written by women writers such as Fanny Lewald, Mathilde Franziska Anneke, and Jenny Hirsch, and I looked at New York's Schiller Festival in 1859 and German and German-American poetry published in the periodic press to mark the occasion. There was also a panel on teaching transnational studies at the annual conference for the American Association of Teachers of German (AATG) in November 2009; speakers considered translation, German-language literature in the classroom, transnational women's writing, teaching German literature and culture from a transnational perspective, and teaching nineteenth-century German-American literature to graduate students. Kristine Horner, a sociolinguist at the University of Leeds, organized an interdisciplinary conference held in Madison in March 2010, "Representing and Experiencing Transnationalism: Germanic Languages and Cultures in Global Perspective," with speakers from the fields of sociolinguistics, social anthropology, cultural geography, literary studies, and film studies.<sup>41</sup>

Recent developments concerning the H-Net discussion forum Transnational German Studies (H-TGS, formerly German-American and German-Canadian Studies, or H-GAGCS) also reflect some of the newer impulses mentioned above. The list's editors and advisory board members have broadened the list's focus beyond North America to include regions such as South America and Australia, for example. The new name better reflects the focus on host societies, detailed aspects of migrant life, cultural

41 The conference was sponsored by the Worldwide Universities Network and co-organized with the Max Kade Institute at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

transfers, and transnational identities. An interdisciplinary effort that aims to draw on and contribute to disciplines such as history, geography, migration studies, ethnology, anthropology, linguistics, and literary and cultural studies, the list aims to provide a moderated, multidisciplinary forum for the discussion of topics relevant to the study of German migration and intercultural transfer between German and non-German societies from the seventeenth century to the present.

Let me conclude by taking us back to Reinhold Solger, whose German-American life and works speak to the inherent value of rediscovering and reevaluating virtually lost German-language literary texts published in the United States. Solger's German-language play *Der Reichstagsprofessor*, published in Berlin in 1850 as a commentary on the failed attempt to create a unified German state, first caught my attention when I was an undergraduate. Years later I learned that Solger, after emigrating to the United States, had refashioned his text into an abolitionist drama, published in 1860. Solger sets his major literary work, the novel *Anton in Amerika* (1862), against a background of American and European events; his rich cast of characters and plot reveal not only how he took up German ideas and values and transformed them to reflect his new national context, but also how his new homeland influenced his thinking and writing. The study of literary texts by German-American authors such as Solger can benefit from current scholarship and new critical approaches coming not only from German studies and American studies but also from fields such as history and transnational, migration, cultural, and ethnic studies. This sort of broad, interdisciplinary approach and collaboration is being advocated by many of the scholars discussed above and serves as a good formula for ensuring that the field of German-American literature remains an important factor in and contributor to the many discourses on ethnic, national, and transnational identity, culture, and history.